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15/02/2001

Pay Equity System at an Impasse

Ottawa – February 15, 2001 – The Canadian Human Rights Commission tabled a special report to Parliament today concerning pay equity. In its report, entitled *Time for Action*, the Commission outlines serious difficulties associated with the existing federal pay equity law and proposes a different way of achieving this human right.

"Major pay equity cases are at a virtual impasse because of the current system," said Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. "We believe it is time the government made the necessary changes to ensure that pay equity becomes a reality. Our report suggests a series of guiding principles to help realize this goal."

The existing complaints-based method of achieving pay equity has encouraged a protracted and expensive legal process, which has seriously hampered efforts to implement pay equity. Larger cases in particular can continue for years as a result of legal challenges, with the result that employees must wait far too long before wage discrimination is ended.

At the moment, the Commission can act only when a complaint is filed. This means that pay equity is implemented unevenly within the federal jurisdiction. Drawing on its more than 20 years of experience with the current law, the Commission believes that a more effective way to address systemic discrimination is through an obligation to achieve pay equity over time that would apply to all employers. Progress towards this important human rights goal should be monitored by either the Commission or another independent agency.

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